Course Syllabus
COMM-5303_001 – Research Methods
Tuesday, 7:00-9:30pm, OCNR 258

Dr. Michelle M. Maresh-Fuehrer
Office: Bay Hall 329
Hours: T 5:30-6:45pm, WR 2:30-4:00pm, and by appointment
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I am happy to be your friend on social media sites, but please do not ask me questions about class via social media!

Course Description
This course is designed as an intellectual and practical introduction to communication research at the graduate level, specifically epistemological, intellectual and practical issues associated with qualitative and quantitative research. Students will examine a broad survey of research methods and data collection and analyses. The course will help the student understand issues related to ethics, institutional review and applied/corporate/evaluation research. Informed participation in class discussion will be particularly important in this class.

Student Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:
✓ Understand issues related to research in the communication field, including practical aspects;
✓ Know how to employ qualitative and quantitative research methods; and
✓ Understand the basics of data collection and analysis in research.
Students should also be able to:
✓ Describe the purpose of human subjects training;
✓ Obtain a human subjects research certificate; and
✓ Articulate their position within the 4 epistemological paradigms.

Required Text
There is no required text for this course; the instructor will provide students with any necessary readings.

Course Assignments & Grade Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CITI Training Certificate</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnography Exercise</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview &amp; Transcription Exercise</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Data Coding Exercise</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey Writing Exercise</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Reports (5 at 25 points each)</td>
<td>125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Descriptive Statistics</td>
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<td>Chi-Square</td>
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<tr>
<td>T-Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANOVA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correlation &amp; Regression</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation (15 at 5 points each)</td>
<td>75</td>
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Total Points: 385

Grade Calculation:

A  90% of the total points 347 points – 385 points
B  80% of the total points 308 points – 346 points
C  70% of the total points 270 points – 307 points
D  60% of the total points 231 points – 269 points
F  50% of the total points 000 points – 230 points
A Successful Course Experience

A successful experience in this course will depend on your individual commitment and work ethic. I encourage all students to visit with me frequently throughout the semester, rather than waiting until the end of the semester to ask questions or express concerns. As in most graduate courses, students should be proactive about their work and ready to discuss concepts and share examples during class. Furthermore, a professor who is familiar with their students is better able to help their students accomplish their personal goals, so make yourself known! Be known for doing good work, contributing during class discussion, and talking about your concerns/challenges/successes/goals with me outside of class. If you have suggestions that will enrich your learning experience, please let me know.

Dropping a Course

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this course; however, at times, events can occur that make dropping a course appear to be a wise decision. Before deciding to drop this course, please talk with me to be sure that this is the best possible decision for you. If you do decide to drop this course, you must initiate the process by going to the Student Services Center (the “round building”) and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation will not automatically drop you from the course. Friday, April 11 is the last day to drop a course this semester.

Course Policies

Am I required to attend this course?

- Prompt arrival, attendance, and participation are all vital to your success in this course. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and contribute to the classroom experience by actively listening, asking questions, sharing examples, participating in discussions, and taking part in class activities.
- Attendance and participation will be graded. Each student will earn 5 points for every class session that they attend. If students attend but do not participate in class, I reserve the right to assign 0 points for the day. In all fairness, students will be notified that their lack of participation will result in 0 points before the points are assigned.

What are your expectations for my assignments?

- It should go without saying that quality work is an expectation. As a graduate student in Communication, it is expected that you will have effective writing and speaking skills and that you will seek my help if you need assistance in these areas. It is also expected that your work will be free from plagiarism, will demonstrate critical thinking, and will show that you are thinking “beyond the textbook.”
- All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date shown on the course syllabus, unless otherwise noted. If otherwise noted, assignments are due on the exact date and at the exact time noted on the assignment. If an assignment is late/forgotten/otherwise not turned in on time, the student will not receive credit for the assignment.
- Assignments should be turned in as a hard copy unless otherwise noted. If an assignment is turned in using a means other than hard copy, the student will not receive credit for the assignment. Students should complete assignments on time to reduce the risk of emergencies, such as running out of ink, paper, or not having access to a printer or computer. Students should also save their files in multiple locations to reduce the risk of losing their work.

What if I am absent?

- In the event of an absence, I must be notified before the missed class period in order for the absence to be excused. If I am not notified before the missed class period, the absence will be considered unexcused unless the student provides documentation for an excused absence (i.e., athletics, family emergencies, illness, university-sponsored travel). I reserve the right to determine whether an absence is excused. Late work will only be accepted for excused absences and must be turned in or made up within 7 days of the missed deadline.
- Regardless of the status of an absence, when a student is absent they are responsible for obtaining the information that was missed during class. Students my wish to select a classmate(s) at the beginning of the semester that will agree to help with this task.

I have a question about one of my grades, what should I do?

- Should a student have a question about their grade on a particular assignment, I follow the 24/7 rule: students must approach me no sooner than 24 hours and no later than 7 days after the assignment has been returned. Once 7 days have passed, the topic will be closed for discussion.
What type of citations should I use in my writing and speaking assignments?

- All assignments that require scholarly citations should adhere to the 6th edition of the APA style manual. If you do not have access to this manual, please visit: http://library.nmu.edu/guides/userguides/style_apa.htm#website

I need help with my work, what should I do?

- Come talk to me!
- I am happy to help students with their understanding of assignments by reading through drafts and answering questions about class assignments; however, I will not be able to provide adequate assistance within 36 hours of a deadline, so students should be proactive about starting their assignments and seeking feedback early.
- Should any situation arise, where I can be of assistance (i.e., you do not have a printer), please come talk to me.

What are the rules for classroom conduct?

- I treat my classroom as a small community; thus, we will maintain a harassment-free environment that is welcoming to different viewpoints and ideas. Any profane or inappropriate ethnic, gender, racial, age, appearance, and/or lifestyle-related comments will not be accepted. Any student who violates this policy will be asked to leave the classroom.
- Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VIII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, online classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Notice To Students With Disabilities

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Academic Advising

Students in the Master’s of Arts program in Communication are required to meet with their faculty mentor to register for classes.

Grade Appeal Process

Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

Academic Honesty

Students unaware of the university’s statement on academic honesty should review it in the Undergraduate Catalog or Student Handbook. Examples of academic dishonesty and plagiarism are using someone else’s ideas and not giving them credit; presenting a paper that is not originally yours; handing in assignments that are not originally yours; presenting “facts” or lifting ideas from sources without crediting the source; presenting falsified opinions and figures; cheating on an exam; and turning in the same work in multiple classes. If you are uncertain as to what actions constitute plagiarism or dishonesty, please ask your professor. Students who violate the code of honesty in this class will receive a 0 on that assignment. Any student receiving more than one “0” for academic dishonesty or plagiarism will fail the course and may be expelled from the program. Note: All violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Dean and Office of Student Affairs who maintains documentation of such offenses for at least 5 years.
Assignment Descriptions

**Please do not use these guidelines to begin your work early, as they are incomplete and subject to change. Full descriptions and grading rubrics will be provided to you closer to the respective due dates.**

**CITI Training Certificate (10 points)**
Each student in this course will be required to obtain their human subjects certification. The certification is free and is received upon completion of an online exam. All students must turn in their human subjects certificate by the date listed on the syllabus. If students have completed their CITI training prior to this course, they may turn in their certificate for this course provided that the certificate has not expired. The CITI training can be done at http://www.citiprogram.org/

**Ethnography Exercise (50 points)**
Students will be required to conduct an ethnography and take ethnographic field notes.

**Interview & Transcription Exercise (50 points)**
One of the primary modes of data collection in qualitative research is interviewing participants. Each student will be required to interview one person outside of the class and transcribe the interview following a set of standards used by qualitative researchers. Students will be required to turn in their interview tape or file along with their transcription.

**In-Class Data Coding Exercise (25 points)**
Following qualitative data collection, researchers must code their data. Each student will be required to code a data set and make arguments for their coding.

**Survey Writing Exercise (50 points)**
Students will be required to design a survey that is appropriate for statistical data analysis.

**Data Analysis Reports (5 at 25 points each; 125 points)**
Students will learn 5 main types of statistical functions in SPSS. Each lesson will require students to properly identify research questions/hypotheses, run the test, and interpret the results of the test. Lessons covered will be: descriptive statistics, chi-square, t-test, ANOVA, and correlation/regression.

**Participation (15 at 5 points each; 75 points)**
Participation will be graded. Each student will earn 5 points for every class session that they attend and participate. If students attend but do not participate in class, I reserve the right to assign 0 points for the day. Students should sign the sign-in sheet before they leave the classroom—the professor will not be responsible for “remembering” that a student attended a class that they did not sign in for.
**Comm5303.001 Schedule**

**This schedule is tentative and subject to change. All changes will be to the benefit of the student.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, January 28</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Communication Research/4 Paradigms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, February 4</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Research Ethics</td>
<td>CITI Training Certificate Due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, February 11</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Qualitative (QL) Approaches to Research</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, February 18</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Collecting QL Data: Ethnography</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, February 25</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Collecting QL Data: Interviews/Focus Groups</td>
<td>Ethnography Exercise Due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, March 4</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Transcribing QL Data</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, March 11 (No Class–Spring Break)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, March 18</strong></td>
<td>READ: Analyzing and Coding QL Data</td>
<td>Interview &amp; Transcription Exercise Due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, March 25</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Quantitative (QN) Approaches to Research</td>
<td>In-Class Data Coding Exercise Due</td>
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<td><strong>Tuesday, April 1</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Collecting QN Data: Surveys and Experiments</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, April 8</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Descriptive Statistics &amp; Hypothesis Testing</td>
<td>Survey Writing Exercise Due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, April 15</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Chi-Square</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics Data Analysis Report Due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, April 22</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: t-Test</td>
<td>Chi-Square Data Analysis Report Due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, April 29</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: ANOVA</td>
<td>t-Test Data Analysis Report Due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, May 6</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Correlation &amp; Regression</td>
<td>ANOVA Data Analysis Report Due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, May 13</strong></td>
<td>DISCUSS: Rhetorical and Mixed Methods Research</td>
<td>Correlation &amp; Regression Data Analysis Report Due</td>
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